

**COMMISSION OFFICERS**

Adrienne Farrar Houël, *Chair*  
 Cecilia J. Woods, *Vice Chair*  
 Denise Rodosevich, *Secretary*  
 Elizabeth Donohue, *Treasurer*

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Teresa C. Younger

Connecticut General Assembly



**PCSW**

**Permanent Commission on the Status of Women**

*The State's leading force for women's equality*

**COMMISSIONERS**

Lucia A. Aschettino  
 Mayor April Capone Almon  
 Yvonne R. Davis  
 Barbara DeBaptiste  
 Carrie Gallagher  
 Mary Lee A. Kiernan  
 Kristin LaFleur  
 Tanya Meck  
 Toni Moran  
 Melanie O'Brien  
 Jean L. Rexford  
 Helene Shay  
 Susan O. Storey  
 Patricia E.M. Whitcombe

**HONORARY MEMBERS**

Connie Dice  
 Patricia T. Hendel  
 Patricia Russo

**Testimony of  
 The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women  
 Before the  
 Select Committee on Children  
 February 8, 2011**

**Re: H.B. 5293, AA Extending The "Care 4 Kids" Program To Families With A Parent Who Is Actively Seeking Employment**

**S.B. 135 AAC Postsecondary Educational Financial Assistance for Children in Kinship Care**

Senators Urban and Markley, Representative Wood, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) in response to the introduction of H.B. 5293, AA Extending The "Care 4 Kids" Program To Families With A Parent Who Is Actively Seeking Employment and S.B. 135 AAC Postsecondary Educational Financial Assistance for Children in Kinship Care.

**H.B. 5293, AA Extending The "Care 4 Kids" Program To Families With A Parent Who Is Actively Seeking Employment**

*CT Specific Data*

- 83% of participants in the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) Program are female.<sup>1</sup>
- 65% of JFES participants are engaged in job search activities.<sup>2</sup>
- 24% of JFES participants cite childcare as a barrier to employment.<sup>3</sup>
- Most families in Connecticut spend 30% to 40% of their income on childcare.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> CT Department of Labor. Jobs First Employment Services At-A-Squint, December 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

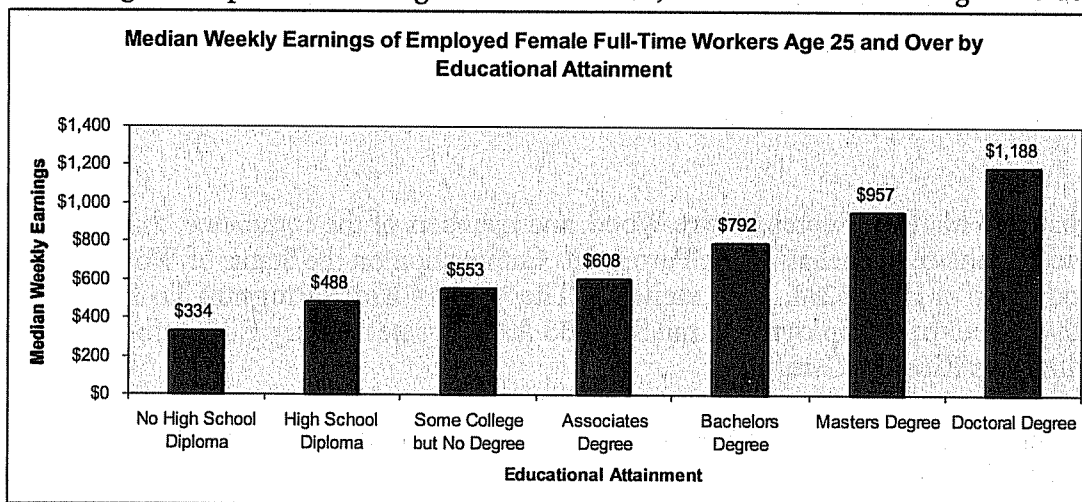
<sup>4</sup> Diana M. Pearce, Ph.D. *The Real Cost of Living in 2005: The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Connecticut*, Office of Workforce Competitiveness, State of Connecticut, 2005.

Work supports such as childcare are critical to helping low-income mothers gain and maintain employment. A study conducted by the Center for Economic and Policy Research examined how patterns of childcare access affect women's employment outcomes. The author points out that, in order to receive publicly funded childcare, many women need to either be on welfare or have just exited welfare. Many working families cannot afford to purchase childcare, and only those who very recently left welfare have any likelihood of receiving public benefits. This creates a hole in the safety net for low-wage working women who do not have sufficient income to purchase childcare in the market.<sup>5</sup> H.B. 5293 would eliminate one barrier to obtaining sustainable employment, and therefore allow many low-income mothers to seek employment.

### **S.B. 135 AAC Postsecondary Educational Financial Assistance for Children in Kinship Care**

S.B. 135 aims to increase the accessibility of higher education for young people. The Young Women's Leadership Program (YWLP), a PCSW program that focuses on empowering young women ages 18-35, believes this bill is one of the best ways to invest in Connecticut's future, in large part because education is the key to self-sufficiency for young women.

Female workers without a high school diploma who worked full-time in 2004 had median usual weekly earnings of \$334. Those with a high school diploma and no college earned \$488; those with some college but no degree earned \$553 and those with an associate degree earned \$608. Full-time women workers who held a bachelor's degree in 2004 had median usual weekly earnings of \$792. Master's degree holders had earnings of \$957, while the figure for professional degree holders was \$1,055 and for doctoral degree holders was \$1,188.<sup>6</sup>



Access to higher education is especially important for low-income young women and their families. Householders with less education are much more likely to have insufficient incomes. Nearly half (46%) with less than a high school education have incomes below the Connecticut Self-Sufficiency Standard. The rate drops quickly as education increases, falling to just 8% for those with a college degree or more.<sup>7</sup>

Everybody benefits from investments in higher education. Evidence suggests that investments in education and training are recouped not only by students, but also in social service savings.<sup>8</sup> Increased access to

<sup>5</sup> Heather Boushey, Ph.D. *The Effects on Employment and Wages When Medicaid and Child Care Subsidies are No Longer Available*. Center for Economic and Policy Research, January 26, 2005. <[http://www.cepr.net/publications/Effects\\_on\\_employment\\_wages\\_without\\_medicaid\\_child\\_care\\_subsidies.htm](http://www.cepr.net/publications/Effects_on_employment_wages_without_medicaid_child_care_subsidies.htm)>.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Median usual weekly earnings of employed full-time wage and salary workers 25 years and over by educational attainment and sex, 2004 annual averages <<http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-table17-2005.pdf>>

<sup>7</sup> PCSW. *Where CT Stands*. June 2007.

<sup>8</sup> The Workforce Alliance. [www.workforcealliance.biz](http://www.workforcealliance.biz).

higher education also benefits employers and Connecticut's economy in turn, with an increase in the state's highly-skilled workforce. Thank you for your attention to this very important matter.

We look forward to working with you to address these important issues. Thank you for your consideration.

